

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-14 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 SAJ-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /151 W

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R 080700Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSS ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3971

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

USCINCEUR

EUCOM

USDOCOSOUTH

CINCUSAFE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 3469

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, TU

SUBJ: THE AMNESTY ISSUE AND THE COALITION'S STABILITY

EUCOM FOR POLAD AND J-2

REF: ANKARA 3238 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT'S HIGHEST PRIORITY PARLIAMENTARY BILL, A GENERAL AMNESTY, WILL COME UP FOR A CRUCIAL VOTE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PERHAPS AS EARLY AS MAY 8. DUE TO DEFECTIONS ON THIS ISSUE, THE GOVERNMENT MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PRODUCE THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY REQUIRED. IF THE GOVERNMENT IS DEFEATED, THE COALITION WILL BE SHAKEN BUT WILL NOT NECESSARILY BREAK UP. END SUMMARY.

1. THE AMNESTY AS A PARTISAN ISSUE

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A. GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS: THE AMNESTY'S PASSAGE IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO THE DOMINANT COALITION PARTNER, THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP). THE GOVERNMENTS IN POWER DURING THE 1971-73 PERIOD WERE, IN THE RPP'S EYES, UNDULY HARSH IN PROSECUTING INTELLECTUALS FOR "CRIMES OF THOUGHT". THIS PARTY VIEWS THE AMNESTY, TOGETHER WITH THE RECENT RESTORATION OF POLITICAL RIGHTS TO EX-DEMOCRATS, AS MARKING THE BEGINNING OF A MORE DEMOCRATIC AND HUMANE RULE IN TURKEY. THERE IS STRONG SUPPORT FOR THIS MEASURE IN THE UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER INTELLECTUAL CIRCLES (WITH WHICH PRIME MINISTERS HAS CLOSE TIES). WE BELIEVE THE PROSPECT OF THE AMNESTY HAS HELPED TO UNITE MOST OF TURKEY'S LEFT WITHIN THE RPP, AND THAT THE RPP'S SO FAR MODERATE INTERNAL POLICIES HAVE BEEN SPARED LEFTIST CRITICISM IN PART BECAUSE OF THE AMNESTY BILL. THE COALITION'S JUNIOR PARTNER, THE NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP), IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORT THE BILL; HOWEVER, MANY OF ITS MEMBERS OPPOSE AMNESTY FOR PERSONS CONVICTED OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES.

B. OPPOSITION'S VIEWS: LED BY THE JUSTICE PARTY (JP), THE OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE ATTACKED THE GOVERNMENT'S AMNESTY BILL AS BENEFITTING TERRORISTS AND "COMMUNISTS", AND HAVE CALLED FOR AMENDMENTS RESTRICTING THE SCOPE OF THE BILL. THIS CRITICISM SEEMS PARTLY IDEOLOGICAL AND PARTLY A TACTICAL PLOY TO DIVIDE THE COALITION PARTNERS.

2. OTHER PRESSURES: WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND THE ARMED FORCES HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE INCLUSION OF PENAL CODE ARTICLES 142 AND 143 (ON COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES) IN THE AMNESTY. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT PRESSING FOR THE INCLUSION OF OFFENDERS UNDER ARTICLE 143 (EFFORTS TO OVERTHROW THE CONSTITUTION OR PARLIAMENT) AND MAY THEREFORE MEET THE MILITARY'S MOST URGENT CONCERNS.

3. TEST OF STRENGTH: AS REPORTED REFTEL, THE OPPOSITION-DOMINATED SENATE ON APRIL 27 VOTED RESTRICTIVE AMENDMENTS TO THE AMNESTY BILL, EXCLUDING THE VERY CATEGORIES OF PRISONERS THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO RELIEVE. THE SENATE'S BILL MAY COME TO A VOTE AS EARLY AS MAY 8 IN THE LOWER HOUSE, WHERE THE GOVERNMENT MUST WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, OR 226 VOTES, TO OVERCOME THE SENATE'S AMENDMENTS. THE GOVERNMENT'S

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CHANCES OF DOING SO ARE PERHAPS 50-50. THE RPP, HAVING JUST WON TWO NEW ADHERENTS IN PARLIAMENT (FROM "INDEPENDENT" RANKS), HAS 187 DEPUTIES, OF WHOM ONE CANNOT VOTE BECAUSE HE IS THE SPEAKER. THE NSP HAS 48, BRINGING THEIR COMBINED VOTES TO 234. THREE MORE VOTES MAY COME FROM INDEPENDENTS. THIS NARROW MARGIN IS THREATENED BY THE FACT THAT SOME NSP DEPUTIES SYMPATHIZE WITH THE SENATE'S AMENDMENTS; ONE NEWSPAPER POLL OF DEPUTIES' ATTITUDES PUTS THEIR NUMBER AT NINE. NSP DEFECTIONS PLUS NORMAL ABSENCES

MIGHT LOWER THE COALITION'S VOTE BELOW 226.

4. COALITION PROSPECTS:

A. WE WOULD SPECULATE THAT IF THE NSP FAILS TO DELIVER ENOUGH VOTES TO HELP THE RPP DEFEAT THE SENATE'S AMENDMENTS, THE MUTUAL RESENTMENTS ALREADY EVIDENT BETWEEN THE COALITION PARTNERS WILL BE EXACERBATED AND THE LEADERS WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING HARMONY, BUT THE COALITION WILL NOT NECESSARILY FAIL.

JUSTICE MINISTER KAZAN (NSP) PREDICTED ON APRIL 30 THAT THE COALITION WOULD NOT DISINTEGRATE EVEN IF THE AMENSTY WERE NOT LEGISLATED AS THE GOVERNMENT WISHED. IN RESPONSE, RPP DEPUTY ISKANDEROGLU DECLARED ON MAY 1 THAT ANY NSP DEFECTIONS ON THE VOTE WOULD BE AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE COALITION, AND THAT THE MATTER WOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THE RPP PARTY GROUP.

B. WHETHER THE COALITION WOULD BREAK UP MIGHT DEPEND ON HOW THE FOLLOWING FACTORS BALANCE OUT:

(1) THE STRONG MOTIVATION OF THE LEADERSHIP TO STAY IN OFFICE AND MAKE A CONSTRUCTIVE RECORD- PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE RECENT UNPOPULAR PRICE INCREASES-BEFORE THE NEXT ELECTIONS.

(2) THE OPPOSITION'S UNCERTAINTY THAT IT REALLY WANTS TO ASSUME POWER AT THIS TIME, OR COULD PUT TOGETHER AN ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT.

(3)
THE FRUSTRATIONS OF THE RPP AND NSP RANK-
AND-FILE, PARTICULARLY ON THE LEFT AND RIGHT FRINGES, RESPECTIVELY,
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OVER THE COMPROMISES FROM PARTY PRINCIPLES THAT THEIR LEADERS HAVE MADE TO KEEP THE COALITION ALIVE.

(4) THE LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE COALITION'S ABILITY TO CONTROL A MAJORITY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

5. IN THIS BALANCE, CONTINUATION WOULD SEEM A RATIONAL CHOICE FOR THE COALITION; THUS THE LIKELIEST PROSPECT IS THAT THE LEADERS WILL DO THEIR BEST TO KEEP THEIR STRAINED PARTNERSHIP TOGETHER. HOWEVER, A DEFEAT COULD WELL LEAD TO TURBULENCE WITHIN BOTH PARTIES AND IN TURN COULD PRODUCE ENOUGH DEFECTIONS TO REDUCE STILL FURTHER THE COALITION'S STAYING POWER. AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE COAL
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMNESTY, LEGISLATION, COALITION GOVERNMENT, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, OPPOSITION PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ANKARA03469
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740111-0564
From: ANKARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740566/aaaacgvq.tel
Line Count: 162
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: ANKARA 3238 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 15 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 MAY 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <30-Sep-2002 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE AMNESTY ISSUE AND THE COALITION'S STABILITY EUCOM FOR POLAD AND J-2
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, TU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005